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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 TEL AVIV 006262

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/IPA, IO/PSC (GERALD ANDERSON)  
PENTAGON FOR OSD (JAMES ANDERSON)

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SUBJECT: UNTSO HEAD MGEN LILLEY SAYS PKO CAN LEAVE WHEN  
ISRAEL SIGNS PEACE TREATIES WITH SYRIA AND LEBANON

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones. Reasons: 1.4 (b, d).

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SUMMARY  
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1. (C) United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) Chief of Staff Major General (MGEN) Clive Lilley briefed Ambassador Jones October 27 on UNTSO's mission in Israel and the region, noting how it supports UN peacekeeping operations in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and Syria (UNDOF), and that its mission would end whenever Israel signs peace treaties with those two countries. The New Zealand general -- accompanied by his military assistant, LT Clayton Willocks, and his political advisor, Francesco Manca -- recounted what he had learned from a recent tour through Syria and Lebanon: (a) Lebanon is still fragile and in need of UNIFIL's presence along the Israel-Lebanon border, and (b) Syrians value stability above everything, even if they have nothing to show for it. The general shared what he said was the little he had learned from his observers patrolling out of Ismailiyah, Egypt, about recent Egyptian counterterrorism activity in the Sinai. Lilley said that he values the American officers assigned to UNTSO, but lamented that he cannot use his American plans officer to the fullest due to travel restrictions placed on him out of concern for his safety. The general said he had raised the issue in New York and turned over a list of force protection options he can offer for the plans officer, but said he had not yet received a response from the U.S. side to his proposals. END SUMMARY.

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UNTSO COS BRIEFS ON UNTSO'S UNIQUENESS...  
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2. (U) MGEN Lilley said that while UNTSO's focus is now on Israel and neighboring Syria and Lebanon, UNTSO's regional mandate enables it to maintain presences in Israel, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. He said its job will be done whenever peace agreements are signed between Israel and Lebanon, and between Israel and Syria. He added that if peace agreements were signed, UNTSO's "unarmed, commissioned and cost-effective officers" could be asked to stay on, even after UNIFIL and UNDOF depart.

3. (U) Lilley explained that UNTSO patrols the Sinai peninsula out of Ismailiyah in conjunction with the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) because Egypt wanted a UN presence to remain after the 1979 Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty was signed. He said he and his senior staff make calls on Egyptian officials one or two times a year. He said that UNTSO is no longer present in Jordan as neither Israel nor Jordan wanted it to remain after the peace treaty between those two countries was signed. Lilley said that UNTSO monitors Israel-Jordan relations through open sources, and that he makes calls on Jordanian officials occasionally.

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NOTES HOW UNTSO DIFFERS FROM UNDOF AND UNIFIL  
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4. (U) Explaining how UNTSO is unique as a peacekeeping force, Lilley said that UNTSO:

- helped establish the UN Disengagement Force (UNDOF) on the Golan Heights, and the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Lilley said that UNIFIL monitors the Blue Line and "the presence of the Lebanese state" on the Lebanese side of the Israel-Lebanon border. He characterized UNIFIL as static, while UNTSO is more mobile.

- is comprised of unarmed, commissioned officers and civilians sent by 76 UN member states, while UNDOF and UNIFIL are comprised of armed military personnel provided by troop-contributing countries under Chapter 6 of the UN Charter;

- is funded out of the UN's regular budget, and is very cost effective;

- reports directly to the UN Secretary General on an annual

basis, unlike UNDOF and UNIFIL, which report every six months to the UNSC;

-- does not "attract the flak" from the Israeli government that UNIFIL does. Lilley added that he feels the GOI's criticism of UNIFIL is unjust, and that he categorically denies GOI allegations that UNIFIL allows Hizballah to fire from UNIFIL positions;

-- is at an advantage compared to other UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs) in the region because the Palestinian issue is not part of its mandate, and UNTSO restricts itself from travel to the Occupied Territories.

15. (U) Lilley noted that he has authorized UNIFIL and UNDOF force commanders operational control over his officers to carry out their respective missions and specific tasks on the condition that his officers remain unarmed and act consistent with UNTSO's mandate. UNTSO has responsibility for logistical support of UNIFIL and UNDOF, as well as for its own logistics, housing, supply and personnel issues.

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SAYS POST-DISENGAGEMENT VIOLENCE HAS AFFECTED UNTSO  
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16. (C) In response to the Ambassador's question about how disengagement affects UNTSO, Lilley noted that the Israeli clampdown on the West Bank following post-disengagement terror attacks has affected UNTSO because some of its local workers come from the West Bank. Lilley observed that UNTSO could potentially be affected if the mandate of the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai is modified in connection with the Egypt-Israel agreement on the Philadelphi Corridor.

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UNTSO CHIEF EXPECTS NORTHERN BORDER TO CONTINUE AS IS....  
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17. (U) Lilley said that UNTSO has 62 observers in southern Lebanon, based in Tyre and Camp Naqura. These observers operate alongside UNIFIL. Lilley said UNTSO observers can also cross Israel's northern border at Rosh Hanikrah and reach Beirut in four hours from Jerusalem.

18. (C) Lilley said that he expects the number and nature of incidents along the Blue Line to remain as is for the year to come -- "like a sine wave, rather than a saw tooth." He said that neither the GOI nor Hizballah wish to see an upset along the border, as Hizballah is trying to transform the perception of it into a legitimate, political entity, while the GOI will be gearing up for elections in 2006.

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DESCRIBES SITUATION IN LEBANON AS ANXIOUS, FRAGILE...  
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19. (C) UNTSO Political Adviser Francesco Manca, who had just returned from a tour through Lebanon and Syria, said that his interlocutors in Lebanon were mainly concerned about UNSCR 1559, the assassination of former Lebanese PM Hariri, and the fallout from these developments. He said he saw more Lebanese soldiers in uniform out on the streets throughout the country than he had ever seen before. The general impression he received from his discussions with people was that their lives were not improving, and that the recent string of assassinations (including Hariri's) had created significant anxiety.

110. (C) Lilley said he is skeptical about reports that Syria is smuggling arms to Palestinian camps in Lebanon, observing that the Palestinian camps in Lebanon already have enough arms "to last them for years." Lilley acknowledged that concerns abound about these camps, but said he agrees with the consensus view that Lebanese PM Siniora has been "doing the right things" with respect to the camps, the four Lebanese generals arrested in connection with PM Hariri's assassination, and Lebanon's overall approach to the Mehlis investigation. Lilley explained that the Lebanese PM is restrained by Hizballah's presence in the GOL, but is effectively exploiting chaos within the Palestinian community to carve out more room to maneuver.

111. (C) Noting his understanding that the Israelis are considering calling for a reduction in UNIFIL's manpower, Lilley said he believes that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) are not capable or ready enough to deploy in UNIFIL-monitored areas along the Israel-Lebanon border. He noted, however, that a British training team is helping to prepare the LAF, and said he thinks that the LAF are mainly lacking in equipment. Lilley anticipated that the international community will eventually feel the need to tell the LAF that it must deploy along the Israel-Lebanon border. In this case, he believes the Lebanese police will follow the LAF, not precede them.

¶12. (C) Manca cautioned that, contrary to what he understands the Israeli government believes, terminating UNIFIL's mandate would not put pressure on the GOL to deploy the LAF along the Israel-Lebanon border. While he acknowledged that there is no reason why the GOL could not deploy LAF observers in UNIFIL positions right now, Manca said that there are "plenty of other indicators that the GOL does not have the will to fill in where UNIFIL is currently deployed." He added that the fragile situations in Syria and Lebanon suggest that the last thing the international community should do is pull UNIFIL out. Lilley said he expects that "healthy" discussions in New York in December will likely lead to an extension of UNIFIL's current mandate for another six months, and noted that the Russians are calling for maintenance of the status quo.

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SAYS SYRIA LOVES STABILITY, EVEN IF NO BENEFITS ACCRUE  
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¶13. (C) Explaining UNTSO's connection to UNDOF, Lilley said that UNTSO observers based in Tiberias, Israel, can cross the Israel-Syria border through the Alpha-Bravo gate with UNDOF escorts and proceed to the Syrian-held portion of the Golan Heights, where they conduct operational patrols and inspect missiles and tanks in zones on both sides of the Israel-Syria border.

¶14. (C) According to Lilley, the Russian Ambassador to Syria does not believe that Syria's interior minister committed suicide as was announced on October 12. Instead, Lilley said that the Russian Ambassador thinks it must have been an "inside job made to look like suicide." Commenting on CNN's October 13 interview of the Syrian President, Lilley expressed concern that Asad's "open, confident" demeanor may make it harder to justify military action against him, should the situation eventually call for that. At the same time, he thought Asad offered "too little, too late," and lamented that Syria loves stability, even while it has nothing to show for it.

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...TELLS WHAT HE KNOWS ABOUT EGYPT'S CT OPERATIONS IN SINAI  
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¶15. (C) Responding to the Ambassador's question about Egyptian counterterror operations in Jebel Halil, Lilley said that UNTSO observers in Ismailiyah had confirmed that the Egyptian military had detained 500-600 persons and then attacked one or two terror camps in the Sinai, rounding up mostly "terrorists, pimps and smugglers." He said he had read that one of the camps was surrounded by minefields and barbed wire, but that he had not received confirmation of this from his observers.

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... SAYS U.S. TROOPS HIGHLY VALUED, BUT HAMSTRUNG BY REGS  
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¶16. (C) Lilley noted that he has an American officer assigned to UNTSO's observation base in Ismailiyah, and two other American officers assigned to UNTSO headquarters in Jerusalem. He said there are no officers in Lebanon as a result of the February 1988 kidnapping and murder of UNTSO Chief Military Observer LTCOL Richard Higgins. He said he raised the matter of the absence of U.S. observers in Lebanon at UN headquarters in New York and with the U.S. military representative at USUN, but was told that the U.S. could offer an American observer in Lebanon only if UNTSO could provide adequate force protection. Without providing details, Lilley claimed that he can provide the force protection, and said he gave his interlocutors in New York a list of options, but has not received an answer to his proposal.

¶17. (C) Lilley noted that UNTSO's chief plans officer in Jerusalem has been an American since 1999. He said his current chief plans officer's movements have been restricted for force protection concerns for years, and the officer is not allowed to travel to Lebanon and Syria. Lilley underscored that he appreciates having U.S. officers on his staff, but stressed that he cannot utilize his plans officer effectively with such restrictions applied to him. As an example, he noted that evacuation plans that the American officer recently submitted for his review were inadequate because the officer had to rely on questionnaires farmed out to officers in the field, some of whom tasked them to low-ranking personnel who had little personal knowledge of the information they ended up providing. The Ambassador suggested that Lilley may want to raise the issue with the U.S. defense attaches in Damascus and Beirut.

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Classified SIPRNET website.

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JONES